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C O N F I D E N T I A L AMMAN 002449

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/08/2019

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SUBJECT: JORDAN: PUBLIC'S HIGH HOPE IN PEACE SINKS TO NEW  
LOWS

Classified By: Ambassador R. Stephen Beecroft for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Jordanian public hope for a rapid, positive outcome for the peace process deflated enormously over the past week, down from extremely high levels following the President's initial statements and actions in January and his June 4 speech in Cairo.

¶2. (SBU) Headlines from recent days include:

--"America Reneges on the Call to Stop Settlements and the Palestinians Tear Up Obama's Pictures" (Al Ghad)  
--"Urging Abbas to Resume Talks without Preconditions, Clinton Supports Netanyahu" (Ad-Dustour)  
--"Obama Succumbs to Israel"

The November 3 issue of Al-Ghad independent daily carried a cartoon by the widely followed Emad Hajjaj that depicted two panels under the heading, "Obama's Slogans." The first panel under the heading, "Yes We Can," depicted a sun rising over a pristine horizon. The second panel depicted a sun superimposed by a Star of David rising over a horizon sprouting settlements with the heading, "No We Can't!"

¶3. (SBU) A majority of daily columnists and analysts have evinced deep frustration and bitter despair, with emotionally charged commentaries expressing strong criticism of the perceived failure of the United States to live up to its promises. Widely read columnist Fahd Al-Fanek wrote in his November 3 column published in the government-owned Al-Rai daily: "We had high hopes in the new U.S. President before he accomplished anything. It was enough that he is not George Bush. It is time to reevaluate and admit that Bush, despite his downfalls, achieved more in regards to the Palestinian issue than Obama has."

¶4. (SBU) The substance and emotional tone of the reporting and commentary echoes that of the King in an October 8 interview with Haaretz when he discussed the peace process: "The challenge is to stop looking at short-term solutions that will only get us into more problems. I think there is more anger on all sides. Do we want to see this anger trigger more war and more conflict or do we want to reach peace." It also echoes that of the King's interview with the Italian paper La Repubblica, published October 19, when he said: "The failure to resolve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and achieve Arab-Israeli peace is the most serious threat to peace and to stability in the region, including in the Mediterranean. That must be the priority. In the beginning there were great hopes, but now the horizon seems to be moving farther away."

¶5. (SBU) Contributing to the tenor of reporting was a string of public statements by Palestinian chief negotiator Saeb Erekat, which followed the Secretary's meetings with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas in Abu Dhabi and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Jerusalem and Senator

George Mitchell's meetings with Jordan's King Abdullah and Abbas in Amman. "If America cannot get Israel to implement a settlement freeze, what chance do Palestinians have of reaching agreement with Israel on permanent settlement issues," Erekat told the press on November 1. He added that there was "no possibility to resume talks under the current circumstances and the Israeli intransigence."

Beecroft